

there were holes in you (the kind that i could not mend)

Posted originally on the [Archive of Our Own](http://archiveofourown.org/works/31823455) at <http://archiveofourown.org/works/31823455>.

Rating:	Teen And Up Audiences
Archive Warning:	Graphic Depictions Of Violence
Fandoms:	Video Blogging RPF , Rust (Video Game)
Relationship:	Wilbur Soot & TommyInnit
Characters:	Wilbur Soot , TommyInnit (Video Blogging RPF)
Additional Tags:	Gun Violence , Gunshot Wounds , Drowning , Hurt/Comfort , Whump , Wilbur Soot and TommyInnit are Siblings , found family though , Family Dynamics , Protective Wilbur Soot , Angry Wilbur Soot , Older Sibling Wilbur Soot , TommyInnit Nearly Dies (Video Blogging RPF) , TommyInnit Angst (Video Blogging RPF) , Hurt TommyInnit (Video Blogging RPF) , no beta we die like l'manberg
Language:	English
Series:	Part 2 of crimeboys rust , Part 1 of build-a-fic twitter polls
Stats:	Published: 2021-06-08 Words: 4,047 Chapters: 1/1

there were holes in you (the kind that i could not mend)

by [willowsick](#)

Summary

Now how Tommy ended up submerged in murky swamp water, gunshot wound bleeding profusely from his side as it turned the brown sludge of the lake even darker, he wouldn't have been able to tell you.

Honestly, and quite frankly, he didn't think he deserved to be shot but hey, such are the rules of bandit camps he supposed.

Notes

tw's for gun violence, gunshot wounds, and drowning. please read carefully :)

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title from always gold by radical face

See the end of the work for more [notes](#)

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He thought numbly, as he sank to the bottom of the shallow water, that this would be a fucking dumb way to go. Wilbur would probably be pissed with him. Oh well, the pain radiating from his side that made his entire left side of his body feel like it was engulfed in flame wasn't the best motivator to try and fight to the surface of the water.

The last thing Tommy recalled before he allowed the darkness to overtake him was a muffled scream from somewhere above the surface, a splash, and the silhouette of a hand reaching for him.

He couldn't bring himself to reach back.

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A hand snapped in front of Tommy's eyes, drawing his attention back to Earth rather than wherever the hell he had spaced out to.

"Tommy! Are you even listening to me?" Wilbur muttered, bringing his hand back from in front of Tommy's face. He looked annoyed but also mildly concerned, brow furrowed. Tommy just blinked back at him for a moment before clearing his throat.

"Uh- Of course I was." Tommy responded with a cough, glancing away from Wilbur's unconvinced gaze. He swung his legs from the crate he was sat on. Wilbur stood in front of him, having stopped his pacing when he noticed Tommy's uncharacteristic silence.

The warehouse walls creaked eerily around them, noisy and unsteady like they would collapse in on themselves at the smallest rustle of a breeze. Tommy knew they wouldn't. This warehouse had survived an apocalypse and the hell scape that came afterwards. It was rickety and it was old, but it was a trustworthy shelter. Tommy watched absentmindedly as a rat scurried across the floor a distance behind Wilbur's feet.

"Uh huh, and what exactly was I just saying?" Wilbur prodded, crossing his arms in front of his chest. His beanie was tugged low on his head, keeping him warm from the autumn chill. The dark bags under his eyes were more prominent in the dull lighting, and his cheeks were sunken and hollow. They had been running low on food, and Wilbur was losing sleep over it.

"Umm, something about needing more food and ammo?" Tommy shot back through gritted teeth, more of a question than the answer Wilbur had been looking for. He winced at Wilbur's frustrated groan, looking back to see him dragging a hand down his face.

"So you missed, what, that entire thing?" Wilbur asked, foot tapping against the floor impatiently. He glared at Tommy, and Tommy felt himself shrink at it.

“Sorry?” Tommy shrugged, hiking his shoulders up as he glanced back down to his hands, numbly picking at the nail of this thumb. He heard Wilbur’s ever tired sigh, and only flinched slightly when he felt a warm hand placed on his shoulder.

“Look at me, and listen this time.” Wilbur chided lightly, and Tommy tore his gaze away from his *most interesting* hands to meet the older man’s eyes.

“Supply drops are kind of shit this month, and we’ve already scavenged every house, shop, and car within a 10 mile radius of the house. We’re going to have to stop by a bandit camp.” Wilbur starts, eyes serious. Tommy gulps, but nods. Wilbur is never usually this serious about scavenging, so he resolutely decides it’s better for him to keep his mouth shut.

“Now this is where you have to listen to me, Tommy. These bandit camps are no joke. They’re not good people. I never wanted to take you to one of these but without extra guns I don’t like the idea of leaving you alone at home. So unfortunately, you’re coming with me,” Wilbur keeps going, and when Tommy opens his mouth to cheer about being allowed to tag along, he is quick to cut the younger off.

“-And you’re going to do exactly as I say.” He finishes, giving Tommy a *look* that has him looking away with his arms crossed and a childish pout.

A hand settles on the top of his head and Tommy turns to stare owlishly up at Wilbur. He looks concerned, almost *scared* and Tommy thinks, no. Wilbur can’t be scared, because if Wilbur is scared, Tommy should be terrified and Tommy didn’t want to be terrified. He tried to ignore the twist in his gut at the thought as Wilbur leaned down to be eye level with him.

“You’re going to stay behind me, and you’re going to keep quiet. No weapons, no back talk, none of your sarcastic quips because we don’t know how these people will react. We don’t *want* to know how they’d react. Got it?” Wilbur says, brown eyes boring holes into Tommy’s blue and the younger can only curtly nod under the hand still in his hair.

The hand in his hair ruffles his blonde curls and the ghost of a smile paints Wilbur’s lips.

“Good kid. Now up. Daylight’s burning and I’d rather not have to deal with that place past sunset.” Wilbur pulls away, making an upwards motion with his hands as he ushers Tommy to hop off the crate.

Tommy does so, not without some light muttering about how bullshit it is that he had to *walk* instead of getting a piggyback, which drew a sharp laugh from Wilbur so Tommy counted that as a win.

He ended up getting the piggyback he wanted anyway, after some whining and complaining and flashing Wilbur with the biggest puppy dog eyes he could muster. Tommy counted that as a double win.

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Tommy wrinkled up his nose as they crossed yet another bridge over the murky swamp water. This place smelled like shit.

It was a small settlement, made of multiple outhouses and buildings built on stilts and connected by countless bridges. There were multiple guards, clutching tightly to their guns and baring their teeth to Tommy as he passed, and the boy found himself stepping closer to Wilbur's side. Wilbur would spare him a glance, an almost smug little smirk dancing on his lips, but instead of teasing the younger he'd just reach behind him and wrap a hand around his thin wrist with a reassuring squeeze. Tommy would never admit how much he appreciated the small gesture.

Tommy followed in Wilbur's shadow as they made their way through the camp, stopping multiple times at different shops. Tommy kept quiet, tapping his shoes against the wooden planks under his feet as he let Wilbur do all the talking. The man had a way with words Tommy couldn't help but admire. Sure, Tommy was proud of his own spitfire way of intimidation, but there was something almost elegant in the way Wilbur used his silver tongue.

They had been finishing up their business, all the supplies the two could afford with their limited scraps stuffed into their backpacks, when—of course—Tommy got into some deep shit.

It hadn't even been that big of a deal really, but of course when a teenage boy who has quite the mouth on him gets a little too defensive, something was bound to explode out of proportion.

It happened when as they were turning to make their way out of the camp, a guard shouldered Wilbur roughly, causing him to drop the backpack of supplies he had yet to sling over his shoulder with a gasp. Tommy had whirled on the guard, eyes alight and teeth bared.

"Hey, you dick! The hell was that for?" He shouted, making the guard stop in his place and turn slowly around to face the kid. When Tommy saw the deadly look on the man's face and the scar running from the top of his eye to his split lip, he suddenly remembered that, yeah, this place was full of *bandits*.

"Your friend should have watched where he was going." The guard, or he should say, bandit spat back with a chuckle and a dirty grin. The bandit stood up to full height, crossing his arms across his chest and glaring at Tommy like it were some kind of challenge.

Oh, fuck this bitch. He'd take the challenge.

"There was plenty of room, asshole. You did it on purpose. The least you can do is say sorry." Tommy stepped forward and tried to ignore the pit of fear in his stomach as he looked down to notice the gun on the man's hip.

The man was silent, seemingly registering Tommy's words, and for a moment Tommy thought he was going to suck up and apologize. Then the man *laughed*.

It was barking, wheezing sound that made Tommy cringe away as he looked back at the man in confusion. The scene had attracted the attention of some other bandits who joined in on the man's laughing fit.

“Awe, did mommy teach you about manners? Did I hurt your feelings? You want me to say sorry?” The bandit teased through his chuckles, and Tommy’s cheeks and ears grew suddenly hot with embarrassment. He bristled, stepping closer with his fists clenched against his sides and nails digging crescent moons into the skin of his palms.

“Tommy.” Wilbur warned from behind him, and Tommy glanced back to see the man stepping closer with the backpack now securely slung onto his back. “Come on. This isn’t worth it.” Wilbur whispered into his ear as he pressed a hand gently to his shoulder.

Tommy closed his eyes, breathing deeply and nodding before turning and following Wilbur. He didn’t see the glint of pride that shone in Wilbur’s eyes.

“Yeah, yeah. Go cry to mommy about it.” The bandit teased once more and Tommy tensed once again.

Alright, seriously. *Fuck* this guy.

Tommy shrugged Wilbur’s hand that was still gripping his shoulder off roughly, whirling around and marching up to the bandit once more.

“The fuck’s your problem, man?” Tommy seethed through gritted teeth, but before he could get too close the other bandits surrounding the fucker converged on him, taking him by the arms and dragging him further away.

“Hey! You motherfuckers- Get off me!” Tommy shouted, wriggling in their harsh grip that he could feel through the fabric of his clothes and that he was sure would bruise in the morning.

“Hey!” Wilbur shouted from farther down the platform, but soon he too was held back by rough hands. “Don’t fucking touch me- Tommy!” Wilbur yelled, yanking roughly against their grip but it was no use.

Tommy looked up to meet his eyes from where they were separated, held back by multiple bandits and the man with the scar stood between them.

Wilbur looked terrified. What did that make Tommy?

Tommy froze as he saw the man unholster the gun on his hip, and tried not to notice Wilbur do the same from behind the man. From the fear or the adrenaline suddenly pumping through his veins he wasn’t sure, but Tommy began to shake.

‘No, kid. The fuck is *your* problem? Maybe it’s time to show you how things are done around here. Make a good example for big brother here, yeah?’ The bandit chuckled darkly, cocking his gun.

Behind the man, Wilbur looked near tears.

“Hey, man listen, we can talk about this. You don’t have to do shit.” Wilbur pleaded, twisting and pulling helplessly in the bandits’ hold. The bandit didn’t even spare him a glance as he leveled his gun to Tommy.

“Hey, hey, no listen. Listen-!” Wilbur shouted, volume raising as with his desperation.

Bang!

A fiery pain unlike any Tommy had ever felt tore through his side, right above his left hip. It was white hot, and felt like fire spreading across his bare skin.

“No!” Wilbur screamed, tugging harshly against his restrainers.

Tommy looked up from the growing patch of red spreading across his shirt like a deadly blooming rose. He locked eyes with Wilbur across from him.

Shit.

Before he could say anything, even take a breath, the hands around his arms shoved him roughly backwards and off the platform.

“Tommy!” He heard Wilbur scream before his back hit water and his head went under.

He still didn’t think he deserved to be shot.

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Throat raw and tears in his eyes, Wilbur didn’t stop screaming until he was roughly shoved to the ground.

The man with the scar stepped over to him, spitting on the floor in front of his face. “Let that teach you a lesson.” The bastard said smugly.

Wilbur looked up through dark curls and sent him the deadliest look he could muster. “Fuck. You.” He coughed, shakily getting to his feet.

The man just looked him up and down once, nodded to the other men, and walked away.

Wilbur was left alone staring at the spot Tommy was a moment ago and the growing swirl of red in the water.

“Tommy!” Wilbur yelled again, running to the edge and falling to his knees. He peered down into the murky water. He couldn’t see a thing, and he definitely couldn’t see the kid.

He didn’t hesitate to jump in, spreading his arms wide to feel for Tommy. It didn’t take long, as the water wasn’t that deep. He wrapped his arms under Tommy’s armpits and hauled him up out of the water, standing in the water that was up to his chest and pushing Tommy onto the platform above them.

Wilbur coughed and sputtered, bringing a hand to wipe his face of the grimy swamp water before hauling himself up onto the platform beside Tommy.

Tommy who wasn’t breathing.

With his heart in his throat Wilbur brought a hand up to Tommy's pulse point, beyond relieved to feel a weak, but still there pulse thrumming beneath his fingers. He had to get him to breathe. He rolled Tommy onto his side, slamming the palm of his hand into Tommy's back, hard. After a few attempts the boy coughed, loud and wet, choking out the swamp water that had been in his lungs.

Then, he *breathed* and it was the most beautiful sound Wilbur's ever heard.

Wilbur rubbed smoothly against Tommy's back as he coughed and sputtered, face pressed against the wooden planks under him as he breathed. Wilbur realized, with the growing pool of blood beneath them, that it wasn't over just yet.

Shrugging off his own jacket, Wilbur rolled it up and firmly pressed it onto the wound. Tommy groaned in pain at the pressure and Wilbur felt something die in his chest at the small whimper that escaped the boy's lips.

"I'm sorry, I'm sorry. It'll be over soon I promise, but I have to stop the bleeding." Wilbur reassured, taking a bloody hand and gently smoothing back the hair from the younger's face. Tommy looked absolutely miserable, deathly pale with brows furrowed in pain and Wilbur wished for nothing more than to bring his earlier smile back.

Wilbur returned his attention to the wound, keeping steady pressure on the bullet hole in Tommy's side. As gently as he could, he rolled the boy onto his side momentarily, checking his back for an exit wound. He exhaled in relief when he found one, meaning the bullet had gone clean through and wasn't stuck inside the boy. Wilbur did *not* want to have to try digging a bullet out of a fully conscious teenager.

Rolling the kid onto his back again with a distressed sigh, Wilbur realized they'd have to get back to the house before he could properly treat the wound. All of their medical supplies were there, and he didn't have enough scrap to trade for more here.

Unfolding his jacket, Wilbur took the arms of the coat and carefully wrapped them around Tommy, tying them into a tight knot above the wound to slow the bleeding. He then took the boy into his arms, and noticed with a dull ache of his heart that the kid had passed right out again from the pain. It was probably for the better, Wilbur realized bitterly.

Wilbur shifted the two of them until he had Tommy on his back, limp arms slung around his neck with Wilbur's arms under the boy's knees. It hurt with a dreadful sort of pang in his chest when the familiar weight on his back was somewhat lighter and a lot less chatty.

As Wilbur made his way out of the camp with packs full of supplies and an unconscious teen on his back, he missed the raucous laughter that would ordinarily be ringing in his ears.

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Tommy woke suddenly, and was immediately greeted with a pain in his entire body that made him wish for nothing more than the blissfulness of unconsciousness to reclaim him.

The entire left side of his body felt like it was on fire, centered right above his hip where it felt like someone has shoved a flaming hot star into his side. His chest and lungs ached, throat raw as he coughed suddenly, wracking his entire body and only making the radiating pain that much worse.

Tommy gasped, pushing his head back into the soft plush of what he assumed to be a pillow, twisting his hands into the sheets of the bed with a grip that could nearly tear. He heard a quick shuffling, then the stomp of boots running up the stairs. He blinked open his eyes just a slit to see Wilbur as he emerged from the staircase, looking frazzled and breathless.

Tommy swallowed dryly, nearly choking on the desert that was his tongue before speaking with a voice that was raspy to enough to shock even himself. "You look like shit, Wil."

Wilbur blinked at him, shocked for a moment before a startled chuckle fell from his lips and a look of relief washed over him, smoothing his furrowed brow and easing the tension in his shoulders.

"Happen a glance in the mirror lately?" Wilbur retorted as he made his way to the bed, settling in on the edge of the mattress next to the boy and placing a reassuring hand on his ankle. His other hand went instinctively to the blonde's head, and Tommy couldn't help but shut his eyes as a calloused hand carded through his tangled curls.

"Hm. Can't be much worse than you, dickhead." Tommy hummed, decidedly ignoring the way Wilbur coos as he leans into the touch, slim fingers gently working tangles between his finger and thumb. Wilbur doesn't respond, instead dipping his fingers to scratch his nails against the boy's scalp and if Tommy was a cat he'd be purring as he arches into it.

"Patch me up all good?" Tommy asks, eyes still closed as he melts into the mattress with a content sigh. He opened his eyes with a frown when the hand in his hair pulled away to gently tug up the hem of his shirt. He glanced down, seeing the array of bandages wrapped tightly around his torso and the spot of red above his hip.

"Did the best I could with what we had." Wilbur replied, a dark look suddenly passing over his features. He turned back to Tommy, and Tommy couldn't help but shrink a bit more into the covers with that look pointed at him.

"You really scared the shit out of me, Toms." Wilbur said finally, almost a whisper as he crossed his legs and sat his elbow on his knee, hiding his mouth behind his palm.

The look he gave Tommy was intense. Guilt, and fear, and a fierce sort of protectiveness shining in those brown eyes and it made Tommy feel warm and cold at the same time. He appreciated that Wilbur cared so deeply for him, he truly did. He had never felt safer than by the older man's side, and he knew that Wilbur would try to burn the world if it ever harmed a single hair on his blonde head.

Tommy also knew, however, that he couldn't always protect him. Today was a perfect example of that, and he hated that Wilbur beat himself up for it. He hated that getting hurt made Wilbur feel this way. It made guilt eat at his heart like a corrosive and his stomach churn in honest.

“It wasn’t your fault.” Tommy says after the silence had hung between the two for a long moment, and Wilbur looked surprised before he turned his head away with an empty scoff.

“You always have been able to read me like an open book, haven’t you?” Wilbur replied darkly, refusing to meet the younger’s eyes.

“You make it too easy.” Tommy supplied with a shrug, offering the man a weak smile when he turned back to him. Wilbur shook his head, sighing as he ran a hand roughly through his brown curls.

“No, you just know how to read me like no one else.” Wilbur looked up to meet his eyes and Tommy was shocked by the sincerity behind them. Tommy looked away.

“I shouldn’t have let him hurt you.” Wilbur spoke again, shifting until he was fully facing the boy and taking one the boy’s hands in both of his own. They squeezed, a gentle reassurance and Tommy could almost cry from the softness of the touch.

“You couldn’t have known what that lunatic was going to do.” Tommy tried for reassuring, but Wilbur only scoffed darkly.

“I knew exactly what kind of people they were and I still let you step foot in that place. I don’t think I can ever forgive myself for it.” Wilbur responded darkly, not meeting Tommy’s eyes as his dark curls hid his own from view.

Tommy shifted, whining slightly in pain—which caught Wilbur’s attention who immediately shot up and fretted over the boy, scolding him for trying to move—and brought his other hand to rest gently over both of Wilbur’s. Wilbur’s mouth snapped shut with the clink of his teeth when Tommy’s smaller hand squeezed his and the two finally met eyes once more.

Blue on brown, sincerity on guilt.

“I already forgive you.” Tommy whispered, resolutely ignoring the pinpricks of tears threatening to spill over his vision. “I never blamed you and I never will.” Tommy continued, and in Wilbur’s stunned silence he continued.

“If anything it’s my fault for provoking the prickly bastard.” He finished lightly, going for levity and trying to ease the stifling tension suffocating the room. It drew a pained laugh from Wilbur, so Tommy took it as a win.

“Alright, well we can play the blame game once you’re better and back on your feet.” Wilbur suggested, pulling his hands out of Tommy’s own. “I think it’s time for you to rest some more, don’t you think?” Wilbur prompted, amusement thick in his voice as he watched Tommy paw tiredly at his eyes before sinking back into the mattress.

As Wilbur went to stand, seemingly to give the boy the space to sleep, a hand shot out from under covers and wrapped tightly around the older man’s wrist.

“Stay?” Tommy asked sheepishly, all pink cheeks and averted eyes. Wilbur spared him a soft smile before gently removing Tommy’s hand from around his wrist.

Tommy watched, cheeks and ears hot with embarrassment, as Wilbur walked to the other side of the bed before lifting the blanket and crawling under it. He scooted until his back was against the headrest, arm closest to Tommy open in a silent offer.

Tommy took the offer in an instant, slowly and painfully—with the help of Wilbur—he scooted closer until he was flush against the other man’s side, head resting on his chest and an arm slung over his stomach as he melted into Wilbur’s side. A hand found its way into his curls once more and Tommy let out a long, soft exhale as he let the pull of sleep begin to drag him under.

The last thing he recalled was a warm cheek being pressed to the top of his head and Wilbur’s soft words ringing in his ears.

“Always.”

End Notes

hi hello! i really hope you enjoyed! :D

this was actually brought to you by a build-a-fic poll i did over on twitter! the results of this one were c!crimeboys, sbi rust, hurt/comfort. i definitely intend to do more of these, so go follow me @zoneviibur if you'd like to participate in the next one!

as always i very much appreciate you reading, please do leave kudos and comments if you enjoyed! i always love seeing what you guys think <3

Please [drop by the Archive and comment](#) to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!